

Writing Introductions

Exercise: A great introduction is similar to a great opening scene in a movie. List a movie that you have seen and then give the reason why that opening was so memorable.

MOVIE TITLE:

WHY:

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WHY:

Writing Introductions

1. An introduction or introductory paragraph is the first paragraph in any multi-paragraph essay.
2. Successful introductions engage the reader and increase interest in the topic. The main parts of an introduction include the lead, the bridge, and the thesis (claim).
3. The lead should be about three to five sentences. It is how you grab your reader's attention.
4. The bridge fills the gap from the lead to the thesis (claim) and should be one or two sentences. The bridge is when you bring up the topic of your essay.
5. The thesis is the last sentence in your introductory paragraph. It is the sentence that tells exactly what your paper will be about.
6. That makes your entire paragraph about five to eight sentences.

Questions:

1. What three things are in an introduction (in order)?

_____ , _____ , _____

2. How long is your introductory paragraph? _____
3. Where does the bridge go in the first paragraph?

4. Where does the thesis (claim) go in your first paragraph?

5. What is a lead? _____

What is a Thesis (claim) Statement?

- It is the stance, the opinion that you take about the subject of the essay. (This will usually be a one sentence opinion that leaves the paper open to a great deal of explanation.)
- It ties your paper together and gives it direction (the road map). (This will usually be the three-part thesis.)

Qualities of a good thesis statement:

- A good thesis is specific – avoid vague words.
 - Poor Example: Playing basketball is great.
 - Better Example: Playing basketball will improve athletic skills.
- A good thesis is not a title
 - Poor Example: The Decline of Detroit Football.
 - Better Example: Detroit football has recently experienced a decline in popularity due to performance, trades, and ticket prices.
- A good thesis is not an announcement of a subject.
 - Poor Example: My topic is about the problems I had beginning high school.
 - Better Example: I had various problems when I began high school.
- A good thesis is not a question.
 - Poor Example: Why is it important not to be in ISS?
 - Better Example: It is important not to be in ISS because a student will miss out on important educational opportunities.
- A good thesis is not a statement about absolute fact.
 - Poor Example: Florida is in the southern part of the United States.
 - Better Example: Florida is the best spring break destination.

DON'T USE THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR THESIS:

- "In my opinion..."
- "My paper is going to be about..."
- "I think that..."
- Don't be vague or too broad in your claim
- Don't write the title of the story as your thesis
- Don't list facts
- Don't ask questions

DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Be specific
- Make a claim that you have to support
- Make a claim that you can make the strongest argument. (It may not always be what you agree with)

Directions: Write a "+" if the statement is a good thesis and a "0" if the statement is not a good thesis.

- _____ 1. Senator Debbie Stabenow works for Michigan.
- _____ 2. My thesis is about how to get good grades.
- _____ 3. The Great Debate
- _____ 4. While on vacation I experienced quite an adventure.
- _____ 5. Edgar Allen Poe was born in January 1809.
- _____ 6. Implementing school uniforms would have many benefits.
- _____ 7. I am against school uniforms.
- _____ 8. Students think that being "cool" means having to sacrifice his or her morals, giving in to peer pressure, and doing bad in school.
- _____ 9. Comparing and contrasting the two poems will illustrate why "If" by Kipling is the best poem.

Read the following essay prompt and write a thesis statement for it:

Many communities are considering adopting curfews for high school students. Some educators and parents favor curfews because they believe it will encourage students to focus more on their homework and make them more responsible. Others feel curfews are up to families, not the community, and that students today need freedom to work and participate in social activities in order to mature properly. Do you think that communities should impose curfews on high school students?

Building Bridges

A bridge is one or two sentences that connect your lead to your thesis (claim). A bridge will contain limiting information that specifically ties to the purpose of your essay. For example, it might state the names of people you are comparing, the issue you are researching, or the topic you will pursue. Although a bridge limits information from your lead, it does not limit as much as your single-sentence thesis (claim).

Remember, THE BRIDGE IS NOT THE THESIS.

The bridge is just as it sounds: a connector from one place to another. As you learn about different types of leads you will be expected to identify the three different parts of an introductory paragraph.

Exercise: Read the following sample introduction and underline the thesis twice and circle the bridge. Remember that a bridge is where you bring up the topic of your paper, but nothing specific.

Example Paragraph: Circle the bridge. Underline the thesis twice.

Most people don't choose who they eat dinner with every night. It is usually whomever a person lives with, or is around as dinnertime. There are many fascinating people to spend time with while eating dinner. If I were able to choose any three people, dead or alive to eat with, it would take me a while to decide. After great consideration I would invite Oprah, my grandma, and President Lincoln.

LEADS

FUNNEL LEAD

This type of lead is a broad-to-specific approach (think upside-down triangle). Begin with a broad general statement of your topic (you will end up narrowing it down to your thesis statement). Funnels ease the reader into the topic by providing a background.

Essay Prompt: The school district is trying to figure out what problems affect teenagers' success in school the most. Teenagers are faced with decisions everyday that impact their success. In an essay, to be read by parents and staff in the school district, write an essay that shows what effects student performance the most.

Example Introduction:

The life of a teenager in modern America is not always pleasant. He or she is faced with a multitude of conflicts and problems, many of which seem almost impossible to overcome. Most of these problems center around school, which is not surprising considering that the teenager devotes an average of eight hours a day to school and school-related activities. Since school is not an option, teenagers need to be more aware. Primary problems created by school are the intense pressure for good grades, and the even more intense pressure of peers.

List the topics as they narrow down from sentence to sentence:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____ (bridge)
5. Circle five effective words in the sample paragraph
6. Underline the thesis twice
7. Put a box around the entire lead

DESCRIPTIVE LEAD

Relies mostly on the senses and creates a “picture” for the reader. In order for descriptive writing to be effective, subtle transitions are necessary. For example, key words could be used at the end of the description to tie the descriptive meaning to the topic.

Example Paragraph:

On a cold October day, an explosion is heard. It echoes on and on as if it were beckoning for help. Then, suddenly, all is still; and the earth shudders in an interminable silence of total decimation as the nuclear blast is finished. Nuclear obliteration, like what we have just imagined, stands next to us at every political turning point unless world solutions are reached. In order for the threat of nuclear war to be lessened, we must cease nuclear testing and find a realistic way to police arms agreement.

1. Underline the thesis twice
2. What do you think this paper will be about?

3. Circle five effective words used in this sentence that helped the reader picture the scene.
4. Put a box around the descriptive lead. How many sentences was the lead?

5. Write the bridge down on the lines below:

6. What is a bridge, as it pertains to the introductory paragraph?

ANECDOTE

Use an incident or a brief story that is related to the topic. Stories are naturally interesting and appeal to the reader's curiosity. Types of anecdotes include something that happened to the writer or something that the writer observed, something the writer heard about, or something that the writer read.

Example Essay:

The people are swarming about and my thoughts get fuzzy as I run next to the gurney into the operating room. There is noise and confusion as I try to revive the victim of the drunk-driving accident. His left lung is punctured, he is bleeding profusely, many bones are broken, and I don't know if he will ever walk again. Even through all of the pressure that can be imagined in this situation I still want to be a surgeon. If I could have any job in the world and be great at what I do I would want to be a surgeon so I can save lives, positively affect the world, and be proud of my job.

1. How many sentences was the lead? _____
2. Put a box around the lead.
3. Underline the thesis twice.
4. Label the bridge.

Example Essay:

Joey was driving home after a school dance one Friday night. As usual he was driving fast and his Ford began to skid. He frantically turned the steering wheel, but the car went out of control and crossed the center line. It tragically slammed into an oncoming truck, and both drivers were killed. One result of terrible accidents like this is a public demand that high school students be required to take a longer driver's training course. Most high schools offer courses, but the courses are not rigorous enough, or hold accountability to logged hours by each teenager. Therefore, all high school districts should require that student attend driver's training longer in order to strengthen the teenagers ability to drive.

1. How many sentences was the lead? _____
2. Put a box around the lead.
3. Underline the thesis twice.
4. Label the bridge

